

THE BALKANS IN SEATTLE

A CHRONICLE OF THE 18TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE ON BALKAN AND SOUTH SLAVIC LINGUISTICS, LITERATURE, AND FOLKLORE. UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
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The 18th Biennial Conference on Balkan and South-Slavic Linguistics, one in a series initiated in 1978 by the University of Chicago, was organized in Seattle in March 2012 by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures of the University of Washington, and assembled more than thirty participants from the United States, Canada, Russia, Germany, Albania, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, FYR Macedonia and Bulgaria. What added a distinctive charm to it was the fact that the organizers took a special effort to combine two different but related spheres and approaches to Balkan cultures: the academic perspective and the perspective of distinguished residents of Seattle who have a personal, humanitarian or artistic interest in the Balkans. The latter was presented in the section *My Balkans* at the end of each conference day.

The Conference opened with the paper of *Tom Priestly* (University of Alberta, Canada) “Placement of pronouns in a Slovene dialect”, focused on the dialect spoken in the bilingual Slovene/German zone in Austrian Carinthia. By analyzing positions and occurrences of the reflexive pronoun *se* and the singular personal pronouns in relation to verbs, Priestly comes to the conclusion that context seems to be the only sociolinguistic factor affecting the pronoun placement: more formal topics correlate with pre-verbal placement, similar to Standard Slovene, while less formal topics correlate with post-verbal placement, which is more like contact German. The paper of *Matthew C. Curtis* (Ohio State University, USA) “On the chronology of lexical borrowings from Albanian into Slavic” analyzes the chro-

nology of loanwords from Albanian into South Slavic on the basis of Albanian and Slavic diachronic phonological changes. Curtis argues that almost all Albanian borrowings came into Slavic after the fourteenth-century Ottoman conquest of the western Balkans. The paper “Slavic elements in the present Rumanian language and their history” by *Helmut Schaller* (University of Marburg, Germany) concluded the first section. In Schaller’s view, the pattern of borrowing from Slavic into Rumanian was determined by semantic factors. Such a pattern, according to Schaller, structured certain semantic fields which could be related to “nature and agriculture”, “household”, “human existence”. Schaller suggests that the Slavic borrowings in Rumanian and in other Balkan languages may be regarded as typical of the Balkan *Sprachbund*.

In her paper “The female gaze on the new ‘other’—the members of non-Slovenian post-Yugoslav states”, *Kristina Rear-don* (University of Connecticut, USA) analyzes short stories of the contemporary Slovenian women writers Maja Novak, Lili Potpara and Suzana Tratnik. Rear-don argues that the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the new geopolitical position of Slovenia have brought new symbolic layers to the spatial and social categories (“north/south”; “up/down”; “us/them”), noting that the female gaze on the *other* serves the authors to negotiate Slovenian identity by stressing what the Slovenian female characters are not. *Victor Friedman*

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(University of Chicago, USA), in his paper “What is a newspaper? Basic colour terms and Balkan linguistics”, adheres to Trubetzkoy’s definition according to which lexicon and morphosyntax constitute fundamental aspects of a *Sprachbund*. Friedman argues that borrowings from Turkish for *black*, *white* and *red* as universally basic colours are the most susceptible to stylistic variation in Balkan languages. The Balkan colour terminology, in Friedman’s view, may be relevant to the nature of universals and for a strategic integration of typology and contact linguistics. The paper of *Andrew Dombrowski* (University of Chicago, USA), “Pulevski’s Turkish in a Balkan context”, analyzes the Turkish section of Pulevski’s trilingual Macedonian-Albanian-Turkish dictionary (1875). As an early example of West Rumelian, the Turkish text in the Dictionary is of unique value in the Balkanological context. Dombrowski shows that the Turkish text reflects significant balkanization as regards phonological developments, morphosyntax and syntax. The working section of the Conference concluded with “Reconstruction of the Proto-Gheg infinitive” by *Kelly Lynne Maynard* (Moraine Valley Community College, USA). Maynard bases her analysis on fieldwork conducted among the Samsun Albanian population in Turkey, an ethno-linguistic enclave where archaic linguistic features survive. She endeavours to reconstruct an earlier stage of the commonly proposed Proto-Gheg infinitive as “*ma* + (clitic) + participle”, compared to later “*me* + (clitic) + participle”.

The first conference day was enriched with two talks. Tom Priestly presented his photos, reminiscing about his summer vacation when he hitchhiked to Ohrid in the 1960s. In the *My Balkans* section, Peter Lippman, a human rights activist from Seattle, shared with the audience stories about his travels, particularly to the former Yugoslavia, and his humanitarian

activity aimed at helping families affected by war and loss of family members.

Denis Ermolin (Russian Academy of Sciences) opened the second conference day with “Funeral laments and weeping among the Albanians of Ukraine: (con)-text and semantics”. Ermolin analyzes both the published funeral songs (S. Islami; S. Musliu, D. Dauti) and those recorded during his 2007–11 fieldwork among the Albanian population of two regions in Ukraine (Budjak and Priazovje). He distinguishes three main lamenting situations (at home; on the way to the cemetery; at the moment the coffin is being laid in the grave) and discusses common topics, motifs and taboos associated with the ritual. Tracing some Balkan features in the lamentations, Ermolin points to the possible zone of origin of the Albanian population in Ukraine, i.e. the border area between Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo. *Tanya Dimitrova* (Friedrich Schiller University, Germany) presented “Language as a main identification among Bulgarian migrants in Greece”, based on her fieldwork in Greece in 2008–10. Dimitrova argues that, among recent Bulgarian immigrants of various social and cultural backgrounds, Bulgarian language is the primary factor of their self-identification as a “community” and as “Bulgarians”. She points to the reciprocal relationship between language and identity, whereby changes in language use among the migrants indicate changes in identity attitudes, and *vice versa*. Grace Fielder (University of Arizona, USA), in her paper “Language, identity and standardization in the Balkans”, pays special attention to the conjunctions and discourse markers *ama*, *ami* with regard to the Balkan standard languages, Montenegrin in particular. The afternoon section was devoted to literary and folklore issues. *Bavjola Shatro* (University “Aleksander Moisiu”, Albania), in her paper “Metaphysical concepts and hermeticism in contemporary Albanian poetry: the poetry of Mar-

tin Camaj in *Palimpsest*”, focuses on the last volume of poetry that the renowned Albanian poet wrote in the 1990s, shortly before his death. Shatro connects Camaj’s mysticism to Albanian traditional beliefs, and his metaphysical concepts to his understanding of language, memory and the origin of thought and mystery. This section concluded with the paper “Sacred stones in Macedonian folk religion” by *Dragica Popovska* (Institute of National History, FYR Macedonia). It presents Macedonian traditional beliefs and rituals centred on large stones scattered around in the landscape — e.g. the belief in their supernatural and healing powers, and “sacredness”, which has persisted to this day. She emphasizes that people who practise rituals are of different ages, nationalities, confessions and levels of education, which, among other factors, leads to the conclusion about the vitality of very old, archaic layers of tradition and their contamination with new ones. *Aleksandra Salamurović* (Friedrich Schiller University, Germany) presented “Cultural models of self-images and alterity in Serbian newspapers after 2000”. Salamurović adheres to the system theory and constructivism, according to which the media reflect prevailing social relations and symbolic values in a society. By analyzing the Serbian media, she finds that contemporary Germany and its politicians are still chiefly (re)presented by association with Germany’s Nazi past. *Amanda Greber* (University of Toronto, Canada) analyzes Macedonian elementary school readers from 1945 to 2000 in her paper “T is for Tito: good language, good citizen, and identity in textbooks.” Since school textbooks play a central role in nation building and identity construction, Greber conducts a diachronic analysis, looking at changes in language use and the associated rhetoric.

The conference side event was devoted to a newly-released book, *Balkanismen Heute – Balkanisms Today* (ed. by T.

Kahl, M. Metzeltin and H. Schaller). In the *My Balkans* section, Yvonne Hunt, an American ethnomusicologist and traditional dance instructor, spoke about her personal and professional experiences while studying Greek traditional dances still performed in contemporary Greece.

Ivelina Tchizmarzova (Simon Fraser University, Canada) opened the final conference day with “Pragmatic function of non-anaphoric definites and non-deictic demonstratives in Bulgarian”. By examining the use of non-anaphoric noun phrases (e.g. nouns with the definite article *-ät*, the demonstratives *tozi* and *onzi*, personal pronouns, etc.) and non-deictic proximal and distal demonstratives (e.g. *tozi / toz / toja, onzi / onja*), Tchizmarova finds that these forms often reflect the speaker’s subjective viewpoint, which shows that definiteness is a more subjective notion than generally believed. *Ronelle Alexander* (University of California, Berkeley, USA) presented “Bulgarian dialectology as living tradition”, describing an on-going project based upon digitisation of fieldwork material from the Sofia-Berkeley Archive of Bulgarian Dialectal Speech, collected throughout Bulgaria over a number of years. Although the audio clip — accompanied by text files containing transcription, annotation and translation — is the central feature of the digital format, individual linguistic (and content) elements of each file can be also tagged for retrieval. Furthermore, each audio clip not only displays major linguistic features of a dialect, but also constitutes a coherent discourse segment of relevance to discourse analysis and ethnography. The following section was devoted to multilingual contacts and language policies. *Brian Joseph* and *Christopher Brown* (Ohio State University, USA) co-authored the paper “Balkanological lessons from the Greek of Southern Albania”, which came about as a result of fieldwork conducted in southern Albania, an area inhabited by a large

number of Greek speakers. The paper seeks to outline the current sociolinguistic situation of the Greek-speaking minority and report on some noteworthy linguistic features of the Greek regional dialect. Its other goal is to shed light on language contact between Greek and Albanian. The conference program continued with another co-authored paper "Language in the making? The case of Bunjevački", presented by *Marija Ilić* (Institute for Balkan Studies, SASA, Serbia) and *Bojan Belić* (University of Washington, USA). It looks at the project of creating, alongside the already existing Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and Montenegrin, a new standardized language based upon the Štokavian dialect — Bunjevački (the language of the Bunjevci). The paper is based on fieldwork carried out among the Bunjevci minority in northern Serbia. Special emphasis is laid upon the phases that the process of standardization is going through. *Keith Langston* (University of Georgia, USA), in "Managing Croatian and Serbian: the role of language planning boards", compares policies and practices carried out by the Croatian and Serbian agencies *Vijeće za normu* and *Odbor za standardizaciju* respectively. Although the constitutions of the two countries provide for the official use of Croatian and Serbian respectively, Serbia has a law on the official use of languages and scripts, whereas Croatia does not. Besides, the Croatian *Vijeće* was set up by the government, is characterized by a purist orientation and meets no organized opposition, whereas the Serbian *Odbor* is characterized by anti-purism, but its policy meets an organized opposition.

The following section was devoted to Balkan folklore. In his text "About dragons and lions in Slavic and Romanian cultures", *Nicolae Stanciu* (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) analyzes the occurrence of lions in Romanian Christmas carols. As lions do not figure in Slavic folklore, Stanciu suggests that their pres-

ence may have come as a result of oriental influences or ancient heritage (Thracian, Greek or Roman). In her paper "Turkish bride in Christian epic poetry: in the web of epic and social stereotypes", *Lidija Delić* (Institute for Literature and Arts, Serbia) points out that, unlike the Muslim male characters in Serbian epic poems, the roles and domains of Turkish women were not predominantly determined by their ethnic or confessional affiliation. As regards the image of the Turkish bride, the importance of the nuptial theme and the plot considerably toned down the traditional notion of otherness.

Thede Kahl (Friedrich Schiller University, Germany) presented "Old professions and occupational names in multilingual communities of South Albania". Kahl's analysis, which draws on fieldwork carried out in Southern Albania, observes that different ethnic groups have shown preference for certain traditional professions, and points out that some occupational names underwent a semantic shift towards ethnonyms. *Olga Mladenova* (University of Calgary, Canada), in her paper "Textual analysis and historical linguistics", offers three examples of how editions of important texts can provide data enriching our understanding of the history of a language: she analyzes the origin of a Bulgarian orthographic convention (the spelling of the feminine third-person clitic *i* 'her') and discusses new evidence for the persistence of case in nineteenth-century Bulgarian and for the seventeenth-century Bulgarian continuants of Proto-Slavic **ě*. The academic part of the conference concluded with the paper of *Donald Dyer* (University of Mississippi, USA) "Hanging in the balance: real lessons in manuscript acceptance and rejection at *Balkanistica*". In his capacity as editor of the *Balkanistica* journal, Dyer summarized its editorial policy and presented the journal's statistics on the authors, their fields of interest and countries of origin.

The Seattle-based internet bookstore *Plavi kit* (Blue Whale), which distributes books mainly from the area of the former Yugoslavia, was presented on the last conference day. In the *My Balkans* section, Mary Sherhart, a Seattle resident and one of America's leading teachers and performers of traditional Balkan vocal music, talked about her work with Balkan musicians and about her own interpretations of Balkan music. The organizers had a final surprise in store for the participants: a small retirement celebration for Prof. Emeritus Jim Augerot, a renowned

Slavist and Balkanologist. The conference ended with a dinner and a party with a Seattle-based orchestra which performed music from all around the Balkans.

Held on the beautiful campus of the University of Washington, owing to the great effort and genuine commitment of Bojan Belić, Jim Augerot and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, the 18th Biennial Conference on Balkan and South Slavic Linguistics, Literature and Folklore, with its inspiring contributions and warm atmosphere, will remain a memorable experience of all participants.